

CLAIMS:

1. A communications network configuration comprising a packet network to which a plurality of terminals are connected, a service provider network, a circuit switched network provided intermediate said packet and service provider networks, and a distributed gateway providing an interface between said circuit switched network and said service provider and packet networks whereby to effect access of said packet network to services provided by said service provider network.
2. A network configuration as claimed in claim 1, wherein said circuit switched network comprises an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) network.
3. A network configuration as claimed in claim 1, wherein said ATM network is adapted to carry traffic in AAL-2 minicells.
4. A network configuration as claimed in claim 1, wherein said distributed gateway incorporates an AAL-2 interface unit and a shared set top unit for terminals served by said packet network.
5. A network configuration as claimed in claim 4, wherein said distributed gateway further incorporates a telephony service manager for establishing calls between said terminals and said service provider network.
6. A network configuration as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shared set top unit incorporates a client application for effecting signalling whereby to set up calls to said service provider network.
7. A method of transmitting service traffic in a communications network comprising a packet network to which a plurality of terminals are connected, a service provider network arranged to provide service traffic,

a circuit switched network provided intermediate said packet and service provider networks, the method including transmitting said service traffic via a distributed gateway providing an interface between said circuit switched network and said service provider and packet networks
5 whereby to effect access of said packet network to services provided by said service provider network.

8. A distributed gateway for a communications network configuration comprising a packet network to which a plurality of terminals are
10 connected, a service provider network, a circuit switched network provided intermediate said packet and service provider network, said distributed gateway incorporating a shared set top unit for said terminals and a network interface unit whereby to effect access of said packet network to services provided by said service provider network.

15 9. A distributed gateway as claimed in claim 8, and further incorporating a telephony service manager for establishing calls between said terminals and said service provider network.